



VOICELESS VOICES

Message from the President



It is my immense pleasure to publish the Voiceless Voices, Vol. 3, Issue 1, No. 4 (January-March 2025), the quarterly magazine, being published by Global Forum Against

Caste-based Discrimination (The Global Forum) with the special focus to the Global Conference for a Caste-free World (CFWC2025), which is set to be held at Toronto, Canada on 25-27 May 2025.

The organizers have set the theme "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social justice and Elimination of Casteism. According to the organizers, "the event aims to foster an inclusive dialogue and strategies and best practices to combat caste-based discrimination worldwide. "The Conference will serve as a crucial platform for international dialogue, focusing on practical solutions and policy-driven actions to end caste-based discrimination" Prof. Dr. Drona Rasali says in a statement.

"The three-day event is expected to attract a diverse range of participants, including government agencies, policymakers, civil society representatives, business leaders, academic researchers, scholars, students, and activists" reads the statement. It is believed that the discussions will explore how collective efforts can be strengthened to promote justice, equality and long-term systemic change. Caste-based discrimination and untouchability have been severe issues for Nepal and especially South Asian region which is similar to the discrimination of Non-white of America and OBCs of South Asia especially in India. The caste-based discrimination and untouchability have attracted the global concern as Nepali and South Asian Dalits spreading worldwide including American and European diaspora.

Although the UN has passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and several human rights driven covenants and conventions, it is shameful that there exist inhumane caste-based discrimination and untouchability even today not only in Nepal and South Asia but globally. To combat against those discriminations, injustices and atrocities, such conference would be a milestone for bringing about discrimination-free world, enhancing equality and promoting social justice.

On behalf of the Global Forum, I believe that the Conference for a Caste-free World (CSWC2025) will have immense debate and discourse on caste-based discrimination and untouchability from around Nepal and South Asia as well as American and European continents. I am hopeful that the global conference will be able to bring about lasting solution for elimination of caste-discrimination and untouchability with rigorous intellectual and insightful debate and discourse.

At last but not the least, I would like to urge all individuals and personalities representing suppressed and oppressed as well as discriminated and neglected segment of society to take part in the conference, share the issues/challenges and come up with the best solution to get-rid-off from the problem worldwide and to make the conference a grand success!

Padam Bishwokarma
Global Forum

Global Conference for CFWC2025: Making a milestone for ending casteist atrocities

■ DR. MAN BAHADUR BK
■ DHANA BAHADUR MIJAR

Various authorities and rights activists have believed that the Global Conference would be a milestone for ending the caste-based atrocities around the globe. While Voiceless Voices team requesting messages from various authorities of Government of Nepal, Canadian MP and other intellectuals from around the world that they have expressed their appreciative voices and made commitment for solidarity for the event. The conference is set to be held at Toronto, Canada on 25-27 May 2025.

As the casteist atrocities have been spreading globally in a way or other, Sahayatra: International Alliance for Social Justice-Canada, a non-government organization registered in Canada - in

Warm greetings from Nepal !

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for Social Justice for organizing the 'Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025' in Canada. This conference is a significant milestone in the global movement

towards equality, social justice, and the abolition of caste-based discrimination and atrocities, especially in countries like Nepal.

Dalits and marginalized communities remain among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As the State Minister for the Ministry of Forest and Environment, Government of Nepal, I look forward to seeing rigorous discussions on these intersections during the conference.

On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I wish the conferences become great success and reaffirm my commitment to implementing its outcomes. Together, let us build a just, equitable, and caste-free world.



Hon'ble Rupa B.K.
State Minister
Ministry of Forest and
Environment
Government of Nepal

coordination with various organizations from South Asia and North America, is organizing the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 to bring the issue to the international community for combating caste-based discrimination. The main theme



Caste-based discrimination is a structural issue...

An Exclusive interview with conference chair Pro. Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali in page 5

of the conference has been set "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of the Caste System." Over 260 million people worldwide face inhumane treatment and discrimination based on caste, race, and descent. While caste-based discrimination originated in South Asia, it has now spread globally.

The voices of the dignitaries on conference are given in the boxes.

Every day, too many of our neighbors and community members-people of colour, indigenous peoples, refugees, and immigrants- are harmed, harassed, and denied their rights and access to services just for the way they look or where they are from. Regrettably, recent anti-discrimination and anti-refugee sentiments are fueling the sparks of intolerance. Harmful political rhetoric is justifying violent acts against racialized people in Canada and around the world. This isn't right and we cannot stand by as it happens. To truly eliminate racial discrimination, we must come together as a society to address the discrimination that has been built into our systems.



Hon'ble Jagmeet Singh
Canadian Parliamentary
Leader, NDC

Continue on page 2

Message from the Organizing Committee

Across the globe, more than 260 million people continue to suffer from systemic discrimination based on race, colour, ethnicity, and caste. What began as a deeply rooted issue in South Asia has now taken a global form, demanding international attention and unified action. Caste discrimination and untouchability are not just local or national concerns—they are global human rights challenges. We must confront them collectively through strategic dialogue, policy reforms, and actionable implementation at every level.

As the organizing body of the Global-Conference on a Caste-Free World 2025, to be held in Greater Toronto (Brampton), Canada, from May 25 to 27, we are committed to uniting voices under the powerful theme: "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of Caste System." This landmark event aims to foster a global conversation, encouraging the exchange of best practices and collaborative solutions to end caste- and race-based discrimination. We are bringing together diverse communities, experts, institutions, and policy-makers to raise awareness, build solidarity, and influence the creation and enforcement of just laws and inclusive policies. While the conference will address global discrimination, special focus will be placed on the situation in Nepal.

The event will culminate in the release of the 'Toronto Declaration', a comprehensive call to action for civil society, educational institutions, governments, and international organizations. The recommendations will serve as a roadmap for future initiatives, with collaboration from local, regional, and global stakeholders—including the United Nations. We call upon all allies, advocates, and change-makers to join us in this historic movement. Your participation, support, and solidarity are crucial for the success of this conference and for building a caste-free, just world for all.



Santosh Bishowkarma, President
SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for
Social Justice and World Conference
on a Caste-Free World 2025

Dalit Round Table Conference to be held in Nepal

■ VV Reporter, Kathmandu

It was expected that Nepal's new constitution will solve the issues of Dalits and other marginalized community of Nepal under the Federal Republic governing system. However, it is noteworthy that such marginalized groups were not much satisfied when it was promulgated and there was the huge protest. So, it was compromised document among the ruling caste. Obviously, it couldn't work on transfer the power structure (representation of Dalits in political structure, civil service, legal and security structure), redistribution of state resources such as land, budget, educational and health infrastructure, end of impunity in caste-based torture to Dalits and reform in Hindu religion.



To oppose the current exclusionary practice of ruling caste, Dalit political and human right activists have been undertaking different movements. But, there is no clear common agenda that can unite them and accelerate the unified movements in the country. In these contexts, through the rigorous meeting, discussion and consultation, Dalit activists have agreed to organize a Dalit Round Table Conference in Kathmandu on

June 12 to 14. It is expected to be an instrumental conference among Dalit stakeholders to combat the discrimination and atrocities. A committee comprising 101 members under the convenership of Dr. Nirmal Kumar Bishwokarma, former Ambassador of Nepal to South Africa, has been formed along with eight sub-committees.

Major participants of the conference will be representation from Dalit-rights organizations, intellectual from Dalit and non-Dalit communities and stakeholders working for Dalit movements. The conference will review the movement, identify its strength and weakness, and formulate agreed agenda and strategy for further move which expected to be the sustainable solution for emancipation shift from all forms of exclusion and marginalization.

Global Conference for ...

Around the world, the practice of one human being neglecting, excluding and depriving another of basic human rights due to race, religion, caste, gender and status is showing incivility. The worst forms of human atrocities in South Asia and other territories are among the most prevalent because of caste-based discrimination, and the World Conference in Canada on May 25-27, 2025 is expected to create an environment of international solidarity and partnership against it.



Hon'ble Devraj Bishokarma
Chairperson
National Dalit Commission, Nepal



Ambassador

Embassy of Nepal
Ottawa, Canada

Date: 26 April 2025

Message

I feel delighted to learn that the International Alliance for Social Justice – Sahayatra is organizing Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025. I extend my warm greetings to all participants of the conference. I commend the organizers for taking this worthy initiative to engage in meaningful dialogue toward ending caste-based discrimination and building a more just and inclusive world.

As a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual nation, the Constitution of Nepal firmly guarantees equality and dignity for all citizens, outlawing any form of discrimination based on caste, creed or descent. Yet, we too have long grappled with the legacies of caste-based discrimination at societal level. While we have made significant strides, we understand that true equality requires more than laws—it demands societal transformation, education, and culture of equality.

I believe this conference provides a crucial platform to share experiences and reaffirm our shared commitment to human dignity. Nepal stands in solidarity with all communities striving to eradicate caste-based discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. Let us work together to nurture societies where every individual can live with dignity, free from prejudice and exclusion.

I wish the conference every success and trust that the outcomes will pave the way for a future grounded in justice, equality, and mutual respect.



Bharti Raj Paudyal
Ambassador of Nepal to Canada

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Speak Loud, Make Voices Heard!

Time is of the essence to speak loud on the values of important to foster a sense of world community to build discrimination-less society. Addressing diversity and equality is not an option, but a world mandate to achieve earliest. We all human beings are equal and need same level of dignity and opportunity to all. I think the global conference is the right platform for



Akamai University



Dr. Mary Jo Bulbrook
CEO, Akamai University, USA

speaking loud on the issues of racial discrimination. It will certainly bring campaigns and movements from around the world together to make it much stronger. Akamai University is also associated with the conference through our affiliated institution, the Native Arts and Heritage Academy.

The University is very much sensitive and flourishing its academic effort in this regard. It established the Centre for Global Equality in August, 2022 as suggested by our faculty member, professor of Economics Dr. Man Bahadur Bishwakarma. The Centre's goal is to promote Racial Equality and campaign against discrimination and disparity through the academic discourse. Since Akamai University aims on universal equality this is a natural extension of what we are doing.

I expect that the papers discussed and conclusion of the conference will be important resource materials for our Centre. I wish all the best for the conference and cooperation among us.



“This conference shall be etched in history as the pivotal moment where the sands of time shift. To those still gripping the dusty cloak of inherited superiority, prepare to gaze into the mirror of truth, confront the pomp of your own making, and embark on a new journey paved with humility and enlightenment.”

Dr. Uttam Gaullee
Professor, Morgan State University, USA
and President, STAR Scholars Network



The history of discrimination and untouchability against Dalits dates back for centuries. They have been socially discriminated, economically exploited, culturally suppressed, politically excluded, religiously suffocated in one hand and their history has been erased, undermined, negated, repressed and misrepresented on the other.

Global Forum Marked 60th International Day Against Racial Discrimination

■ VV Reporter

Global Forum Against Caste-based Discrimination (Global Forum) has marked 60th International Day against Racial Discrimination on 22 March 2025 through virtual medium and accomplished its council meeting. The virtual celebration of the 60th international day against racial discrimination was organized with the chair of Mr. Padam Bishwakarma, the president of the Global Forum.

In the program, Dr. Badri KC, Chair of the NRN ICC present as the chief guest and NRN USA Chair Dr. Arjun Banjade as a special guest. Dr. Man Bahadur BK, Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Dr. Bishnu Maya Pariyar, Dr. Nirmal Bishwakarma, the advisers of Global Forum and chair of ICDDR D. B. Sagar, former Senior Vice chair of DNF Advocate Mr. Bhakta Bishwakarma extended their remarks with the special focus to the issues and challenges of Dalits and way forward as well as expressed their best wishes for the day and successful completion of the program.

Having Nepal promulgated Constitution of Nepal (2015), it sounds like there are numerous rights enshrined into it but while we talk about its implementation, there is still a big problem.

I hope that the Global Conference for a Caste-free World (CFWC2025) will be a milestone and historic event for bringing about the positive and lasting changes to be creating atmosphere that all human being are born free and equal.

Dr. Bishnu Maya Pariyar
Adviser, Mayor of New Jersey City, USA

ful completion of the program.

Dr. Badri KC and Dr. Arjun Banjade Chair of NRN ICC and NRN USA respectively expressed their commitment for Dalits inclusion in NRN ICC and USA chapter and extended their best wishes for the program. Mr. Motilal Nepali, the senior vice chair of the Global Forum welcomed to the chief guest, special guests, guests and all the participants and immediate past president Tirtha Barma extended the vote of thanks to all the guests and participants whereas general secretary Amrit Bishwakarma moderated the program.

Likewise, Council Meeting was also held with the chair of the Global Forum Padam Bishwakarma. In the meeting General Secretary Amrit Bishwakarma and Treasurer Anita Pariyar presented their organizational progress report and financial report respectively. Member Arjun Bagale presented the amendment proposal to the constitution of the Global Forum.

The Government of India Declared April 14 the Ambedkar Jayanti

■ VV Reporter, New Delhi

The Government of India on March 27 declared April 14, the birth anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, as a public holiday in recognition of his contributions to society and the Constitution. Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated on April 14, commemorating the birth anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a key figure in modern Indian history. Dr. Ambedkar, also known as the Father of the Indian Constitution, was a jurist, economist, and social reformer. He played a key role in the fight against India's caste system and untouchability, ensuring the participation of marginalised groups, especially Dalits, in the mainstream. The day celebrates the life of Dr. Ambedkar and his fight for the cause of social justice, equality, and human rights. It has been celebrated as the Ambedkar Jayanti to mark his contribution to the nation. His birth anniversary on April 14 has become a powerful symbol of the broader movement for social empowerment and resistance against caste-based discrimination. Throughout his life, Ambedkar championed the eradication of untouchability and tirelessly advocated for the rights of women and labourers.

• The first celebration of Ambedkar Jayanti occurred in Pune on April 14, 1928. It was initiated by social reformer Janardan Sadashiv Ranapisa, a follower of Dr. Ambedkar, to commemorate his birth



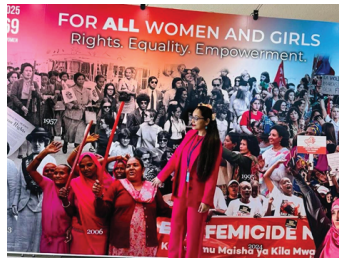
anniversary. In recognition of his monumental contributions, Dr. Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor, in 1990. He is seen as a symbol of resistance against the oppressive caste system and the champion of human rights, equality, and fraternity. His legacy continues to inspire individuals and movements advocating for social justice. Ambedkar Jayanti, even though it is lately declared by the government, is an opportunity to reflect on the ongoing struggles and the progress made by marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, in securing their rights and improving their socio-economic conditions around the world specifically in South Asian countries.

Celebrating Women's Global Agenda at the United Nations

■ VV Reporter, NY

The Sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 10 to 21 March 2025. This year, the global community marked the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that was adopted in 1995. The Beijing declaration has shaped the global conversation on gender equality for past three decades and counting.

Organized annually, the fundamental objective of the CSW is to empower women and promote gender equality globally. The focus of the CSW69 was on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Without a doubt CSW is a unique opportunity to meet and exchange women's agendas.



The session was attended by the representatives of member states, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from entire regions of the world. It was a marvelous event to observe how ocean of women swimming into their lived plights and sufferings to share through the UN Women leadership to seek justice and liberation in their respective countries and globally. More than twelve thousand women participated this years CSW and about one thousand side events were organized.

Well-known dignitaries Durga Sob, Dr. Lily Thapa, Disha Sughand, Prachi Patankar, Kamala Bishwakarma, Bina J Pallical, Meena Verma, Anita Pariyar along with many more civil society-participants from Nepal and India attended the conference and campaigned on the issue of Dalit women of the region. During the two weeks intense celebrations of women's global agenda at the United Nations, Dalit Women from India and Nepal have organized several side events highlighting intersectional perspectives to celebrate their struggles and achievement on fighting caste and gender based discriminations.

The Human Rights of Dalits in Nepal

Dignity Deterred, Justice Denied

Background

Nepal became member of United Nations (UN) on 14 December 1955 alongside other 15 key countries like Japan, Austria, Finland, Spain, Jordan, Portugal, Sri Lanka etc. on the same day. The membership of UN marked Nepal to enter into international diplomacy that opened door to participate in international forums. Nepal is also known for its earliest countries to ratify international human rights instruments. In the international arena, Nepal is well known and praised for its natural beauty, the Mount Everest and birth place of lord Budddha etc. On the other side of coin, it is less known for its history of exclusion, structural discrimination and marginalization of about one quarter of population. People in Nepal faces multilayers of exclusion and marginalization based on gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, geographical remoteness etc. among others. This article focuses on the human rights situation of Dalits who are placed at the bottom of the Nepali society due to long history of exclusion and deprivations. National Dalit Commission defines Dalit as “those communities who, by virtue of atrocities of caste-based discrimination and untouchability, are most backward in social, economic, educational, political and religious fields, and are deprived of human dignity and social justice.”

There are contradictory argument among scholars on how and when the caste-based discriminations and untouchability practices entered into Nepal. Scholars believe that Brahmins are the descendent of invader Aryans who came to Indian subcontinent from the place between Europe and Asia in about 3,400 BC. Those invaders created many scripts like Vedas and Manusmriti to rule the societies. Before the Manusmriti, the Purushasukta in Rigvada talks about the existence of Caste practices but from profession points of view. It is estimated that globally about 260 million people are affected by the caste-based discrimination practice of which majority are in South Asia. The census 2021 recorded that Nepal has around 3.9 millions Dalit population that is amost 13.4% of the national population.

It is claimed that in Nepal the caste system was entered and spread from three different directions. First, Lichhavis in around 600 A.D. entered from India and started the Varnashram system making four Varna and eighteen castes. Later, Jayasthiti Malla (1360-1395) rigidly imposed the untouchability system that included four Varna and sixty-four castes. Second, King Ram Shah of Gorkha (1605-1636) established the system of four Verna and thirty-six castes to reinforce the Varnashram system. Third, in around 1000 BC during the time of king Janak, the Varnashram system spread among the Maithili and Avadhi speaking Madhesi community of Nepali Terai from its origin in India. After the Mugual intervention in India, lots of the ruling classes Hindus flew away to the hill of Nepal and even some established the reign. The high caste Hindu rulers brought untouchables servants and untouchability in Nepal when they flee from India. Prithwinarayan Shah, the founder of the Nepal kingdom addressed the diversity in his famous ‘Divya Udadesh’ by subscribing Nepal as a common garden of four castes and thirty six creeds.

Through country’s first documented law, Civil Code (1854), Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana legitimized the caste system that strictly prevented Dalits from education and economic opportunities as well as excluded from all social life. Different punishment provisions were established by Civil Code (1854) for similar crime based on caste hierarchy, with higher punishments to Dalits.

Due to centuries of state sponsored and institutionalized discrimination and the rigid enforcement of caste hierarchies, Dalits in Nepal continue to face systemic dehumanization that included the practices of caste-based discrimination and untouchability, economic exclusion and forced displacement, labor exploitation, deliberate denial of education and political representation, social and cultural boycotts etc.

These intergenerationally perpetuated injustices strip Dalits of basic human dignity and justice, the very foundations of human rights. Despite constitutional guarantees, deep-rooted caste supremacy ensures that Dalits remain trapped in cycles of poverty, marginalization, and violence. The persistence of such oppression sustained over generations through social norms, economic coercion, and state inaction that demands not just legal reform, but a radical dismantling of caste-based power structures.

Human Rights Situation of Dalits in Nepal

A report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2011) highlights how Dalits remain trapped in a vicious cycle of exclusion and poverty, systematically denied justice and dignity. Despite legal and other efforts, deep-rooted, centuries-old caste hierarchies perpetuate discrimination and untouchability, making eradication efforts immensely challenging. Still practically Dalits are denied to enter into temples, restricted to touch water sources, excluded to eat together with other community people, boycotted in social life, work as bonded labour and restricted to marry with so called upper castes. In case of inter-caste marriage with other caste groups Dalits are killed, physically assaulted, their houses are arson, forcefully displaced, charged with false cases etc. Dalit girls and women are raped and murdered but police deny to file the case, if filed no cases are investigated properly. Police always encourage to mediate such cases out of formal justice system. INSEC, a human rights organization found that in 4 years (2018 – 2021), 62 youths were killed and 249 girls and women from Dalit communities were raped only in Madhesh Province. Most of the killing incidents belonged to intercaste love affairs or marriages. This data reveals the gravity of caste-based discrimination and untouchability in Nepal. One Dalit civil society organizations noted that the incidents of killings, torture, abduction, disappearances, physical assaults, intimidation, threats, displacement, boycotts, rape, sexual abuse, trafficking and verbal abuse have been continued against Dalits. This situation is compounded by little access to justice for such rights violations. In addition, Dalit women faces multiple layer of discriminations based on the intersection of their caste, class and gender identity. A recent trend emerged in Nepal is that police makes fake allegation of human trafficking to arrest, torture and kill Dalit youth in police custody or prisons in cases of intercaste relationships. The death of Sanu Sunar in Kalimati Police Post (May 2010), death of Sridhan Bishwakarma in Dharan Police Post (Augsut 2017), death of 15 year old Kiran Karkidholi in Birtamod Police Post (April 2019), , the death of Shambhu Sada in Sabaila Police Post (June 2020), death of Bijay Mahara in Garuda Police Post (August 2020), death of Roshan BK in Dhangadhi Police Post (September 2020), death of Paltu Ravidas in Dhanusha District Police Post (July 2021), death of Sundar Harijan in Rolpa Prison (May 2022), Bhim Kamat was killed in Morang District Police Office (September 2022). The extra judicial killing of Dalit youths in fake charges

The persistence of such oppression sustained over generations through social norms, economic coercion, and state inaction that demands not just legal reform, but a radical dismantling of caste-based power structures.

are at the increasing trend.

Similarly, Nepal’s National Penal Code Act, 2017 (section 219) defines any sexual intercourse with a girl below 18 as statutory rape, regardless of consent. This provision has become a strong weapon to trap Dalit youths in case of intercaste marriages. These provisions are disproportionately used to justify police torture, brutality, arbitrary arrest and custodial killings.

During the field monitoring, OHCHR found that usually victims were unaware that caste-based discrimination and untouchability acts are criminal

offences under law. In Dalit related incidents often police follows ad-hoc settlements without following formal justice procedures where Dalits are forced to remain silent. There are also findings that the law



BY BHIM PARIYAR

enforcement officials are reluctant to act suo motu upon caste-based discrimination and do not, upon receipt of related allegations, consistently register First Information Reports (FIR) with the view to initiating criminal investigations. Rather, in majority of incidents, police denies to register First Information Report (FIR) rather they pressurize to withdraw complaints taking sides of perpetrators. If incidents are registered then investigations are made intentionally weak. It is also because in justice system the case officer, investigator, attorney, judges usually none of them are from Dalit communities. On the other hand, Dalits in Nepal are not eligible to complain to CERD committee because so far Nepal government has not recognized the article 14 of the convention. As a result, Nepal has not recognized the competence of CERD committee to receive complaints in the case of violence of this convention.

Human rights obligations of Nepal to end caste-based discriminations

As a member of UN, Nepal has moral obligations to respect, protect and fulfill all the international human rights standards. As of now, Nepal ratified 24 international human rights conventions including International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1965) on 30 January 1970. Nepal was the 14th country in the world to ratify the ICERD yet it gutted the treaty’s power by adding discriminatory reservation on four key articles that restricted Nepali Dalits to realize full human rights. As per reporting obligation, after ratification Nepal submitted initial report to CERD Committee in 1972, but failed to submit State periodic reports in every two years, the second and third reports were submitted in time, then combined reports of 4th and 5th were submitted in June 1981, combined 6th to 8th reports in 12 Feb 1987, combined reports from 9th to 13th in 1997, 14th report single in 1999, combined 15th and 16th reports in April 2004 and latest combined reports from 17th to 23rd was submitted in 20 February 2017. The CERD Committee gave deadline for combined 24th and 25th report on 1 March 22 but those reports are not submitted yet. The reporting history to CERD committee is not satisfactory means Nepal is not serious on its reporting obligations.

First in 1987, issuing concluding observation on 6th to 8th periodic reports, CERD Committee expressed disappointment and suggested to Nepal government to withdraw reservations put on article 4 and 6 so that people can fully enjoy rights provided by the convention. In 1997, issuing concluding observation on 14th periodic report, CERD Committee suggested Nepal to adopt special declaration of article 14 to recognize the competency of CERD Committee so that Committee can receive complaints from victims. The essence of article 4 of ICERD is that State parties have to criminalize all the hate propogandas, outlaw the racist organizations and prohibit the State supports to discriminations. The article 6 is about to provide effective remedies and provide adequate reparations to victims; and gurantee fair trials in the incidents of caste-based discriminations and untouchability acts. Article 22 establishes critical inter-state accountability mechanism to resolve inter-state disputes, one country can bring case to the international court of justice (ICJ) when one country believes that the other country is violating provisions of ICERD. The reservations on those important articles hinders Dalits of to seek justice through the international mechanism.

Fifty four years after the ratification, Nepal continues to maintain the reservation on articles 4, 6 and 22, Nepal has yet to make special declaration to recognize the article 14 which opens door to complain to CERD committee in case victims fail to access justice through domestic justice system.

Continue on page 6

Editorial

Global call to end inequality!

Inequality amongst the people and injustices to those who are not in power and are far behind the power-game have been the global phenomenon as atrocities and chaos, discontentment, and aggression as well as negative attitude in general public keep rising. Among those inequalities, caste-based discrimination and atrocities, untouchability and social stigma, hatred and boycott have been uprising and social injustices exist globally. As Louis Althusser, the French Marxist Philosopher introduces the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA), both have been applied for Nepali Dalit community from the part of state.

State in one hand uses ideological state apparatuses to repress the voices of Dalits, to keep them into silent mode and also uses repressive state apparatuses if they shows their aggression and negation to the state-power. As he rightly pinpoints that Dalit movements and agitation have been repressed by the police forces just like Sarpeville incidence occurred in 1960 in South Africa where 69 people belonging to the black community were killed by the white ruler and more than 600 people injured there. Likewise, George Floyd was killed in USA few years back by the police brutality only because of he was black.

Likewise, Italian Marxist Philosopher Antonio Gramsci is of the view that the marginalized people like Dalits in Nepal and women worldwide have been hegemonized and subjugated, negated and manipulated with the state power and creating the discourse of cultural hegemony to largely affecting the general public by not making the conducive atmosphere to be united and resist against the state-power. Furthermore, he employed the concept of “hegemony” to describe a process of “intellectual and moral leadership” that embedded a ruling class. Althusser is of the view that only a collective identity and unified agitation could be able to dismantle the cultural hegemony that state-power usually practice to repress the voices of the voiceless.

The word “caste” was applied to the Hindu system of social stratification. For well over thousand years, South Asia has been governed by caste relations under the Hindu system. Simply, the caste refers to a system of vocational guilds that over time, have become organized in relation to principles of purity and impurity. However, each caste also fits into the overarching hierarchy of the four-fold Varna (Race) system. The authority of Varna is derived from its codification in the Vedic-Brahmin Manusmriti (Laws of Manu). Baba Saheb Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar set out on a lifelong journey to agitate, educate, and organize against the injustice of the Hindu caste system. His activism and views have been immortalized within his masterpiece, the Annihilation of Caste (1936). As a result, caste-based discrimination has been a global practice and it is time to be organized and get connected with all other global movements against discrimination and disparity.

Now, the severe concern is how to raise the collective voices of against discrimination globally and to fight against atrocities and injustices being practiced so long making it praxis. With the view to have intellectual debate and discourse among Nepali and South Asian diaspora along with the academicians/leaders from North America in Toronto, Canada, it is the matter of immense pleasure that SAHAYATRA Canada, is going to organize a 3-day Global Conference for a Caste-free World (CFWC2025). It is a great opportunity for Dalits and discriminated communities around the globe gather, discuss and design the roadmap to combat against any sort of untouchability and discrimination so as to make a caste- free world. The conference to be held on 25-27 May 2025 will unveil ‘Toronto Declaration’ to draw the attention of national and international arena to build discrimination-free world. Since the organizers have good cause to end caste-based discrimination and untouchability worldwide, it is crucial to all participants, who seek justice and equality, to actively take part in the conference and to make it a highly successful with global call to end inequality.

We, the Voiceless Voice Team, have dedicated this issue of its series to the conference. We express our gratitude to its contributors and wish all the best for its success.

The fight against Caste-based discrimination:
The view of an Observer

There is a major need of ensuring that youngsters from traditionally dominating groups start perceiving the importance that fighting caste discrimination is an essential component of the broader quest for social justice. That’s why I would like to imagine a future in which the same enthusiasm being put for climate action, for example, is also invested in the fight against caste related injustices.

For a foreigner living in Nepal, no matter how invested this person might be in the cause of social justice, writing about caste discrimination should warrant a certain degree of caution and humility. This is certainly a piece of wisdom that I should myself keep in mind while I am delving through the issues faced by the Dalit community in the country. After growing up in Europe and enjoying the benefits of a life of relative privilege, in the midst of the systemic changes that brought to the end of monarchy in Nepal, I was fortunate enough to land in Kathmandu for a short term work for an INGO. What was supposed to be a short stint became a life changing experience that still endures over these days.

The issue of caste discrimination is something that has always captured my interest and in many ways, the peaceful struggles carried out by many Dalit activists have been not only an inspiration but something that has been literally fascinating me. My interest has always been aimed at brainstorming on possible solutions to the plague of caste discrimination, and, more practically, how the lives of citizens from the Dalit community can truly improve. If there is a way to look at my quest, if I had to frame a question to define my line of query, this would be my overarching goal: How can members of the Dalit community thrive in Nepal? This is the paramount focus that drives my thinking. While trying to explore this complex issue, I have developed some ideas that I would like to expose through this article.

First of all, I do agree on the focus taken by many Dalit activists on fundamental aspects related to the implementation of just rule of law. Policies and legislations, underpinned by the principles of social justice, must be at the foundations of any social struggle for full civil and political rights. On this aspect it is true that Nepal made some important strides with a new constitution and new anti-caste discrimination policies and legislations. Yet there is still so much to be done in this area. For example, the sensitive issue of positive or affirmative discrimination has been only reluctantly accepted by the so called traditionally dominant classes. In many ways, affirmative discrimination is still a contested topic whose overarching aims and justifications are not yet fully understood by mainstream society. It is safe to say that there is no or little enthusiasm about it and, at the same time, it is abundantly clear that there is a low degree of tolerance towards it. Somehow there is a visible perception that affirmative measures are a burden and even more than that, somehow they are seen as unfair practices by some members belonging to the traditionally hegemonic groups. Therefore in my understanding it is paramount to forge a new narrative not only on the importance of social justice inspired legal tools and measures. We need to go deeper and deeper than that.

It is fundamental to shape a new understanding of what it means, in the 21st century, to live in a society where discriminatory attitudes still are so predominant. Starting a new conversation about caste discrimination is therefore essential. Recently we witnessed examples of innovative and possible transformative initiatives like “Caste Conversation” organized by the Dalit Lives Matter Global Alliance that saw the interactions among youths from all walks of life and from communities to talk about discrimination. This is a good start but we need to go even deeper.

In a recent online workshop organized by



BY SIMONE GALIMBERTI

Dignity Initiative during the month of March about issues facing Dalit women in South East Asia, one theme was consistently being mentioned by the participants. It is something absolutely “old school” and easy to grasp: the need to promote a different mindset about diversity and inclusion at school levels. In simple terms, the activists were referring to the need of conducting awareness programs that should allow students to challenge old but still pervasive stereotypes, biases and beliefs. Such awareness programs should be seen as powerful tools to work with the new generations whose role is indispensable in building a discrimination free society. But such programs should not just be about creating, as the name itself indicates, a new understanding. They should be seen as powerful ethical leadership boosters where participants are in a position to gain new knowledge and insights while also they build new skills to lead responsibly and inclusively.

In a way, to me, getting rid of caste discrimination requires not only effective and enforceable pieces of policies and legislations. It demands real action and with it, comes the embodiment of inclusive and responsible leadership practices. The positive aspect is that we are not starting from zero. Civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, including those from the UN system have been active in developing such material. But does a depository of all these tools and practices exist? If the answer is yes, how easily accessible is it? Putting together all the best practices available and better disseminating them would not itself bring a change. The conversation must be wider and broader and its success will depend on the political will from the members of the mainstream society. So perhaps the best way to answer the question that guides my research on issues related to untouchability and caste discrimination, “How can members of the Dalit community thrive in Nepal?” is through another question.

And this is the following: How can alliances be built? Expanding and elaborating this second question would mean trying to understand how we get different members of the society, especially those from the so called upper classes, more involved and interested. There is a major need of ensuring that youngsters from traditionally dominating groups start perceiving the importance that fighting caste discrimination is an essential component of the broader quest for social justice. That’s why I would like to imagine a future in which the same enthusiasm being put for climate action, for example, is also invested in the fight against caste related injustices. We need to make a stronger case that the struggle for a discrimination free society is as existential as the cause of climate warming. So how do we build alliances? How to ensure the political will that would enable and facilitate such alliances? I guess it is going to be a combination of different approaches and best practices, starting from the simplest forms like involving students at school level. We know that oftentimes simple things do not equate into actions that are easy to execute. Even designing new curricula or replicating and adapting the ones which are already successful is going to be challenged by the status quo. Thinking out of the box means using and leveraging traditional approaches with new ones like “Caste Conversation”.

It is also important that members of the Dalit community, especially the young ones, dare to build their own level of expertise beyond their legitimate desire to fight for social justice. Right now, how many climate activists do belong to the Dalit community? It is true that the privilege of some might make it much

Continued in page 6

Caste-based discrimination is a structural issue that Global Conference in Toronto calls to its end globally

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Chairperson of the Global Conference for a "Caste Free World 2025" and the Founding Moderator of Nepal-Dalit-Info International Network. He is a population and public health expert based in Canada and an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia. In 2023, he was a Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Race and Health Policy in Law School at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA and is also a recipient of prestigious national award of Honorary Life Membership from the Canadian Public Health Association. The "Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025" is set to take place on May 25-26, 2025, in Toronto, Canada. The event is being organized by SAHAYATRA--International Alliance for Social Justice, a non-profit organization registered in Canada. The primary objective of this conference is to foster solidarity for equality, social justice, and the eradication of caste-based discrimination prevalent in Nepal, India, and other countries worldwide. Nepal has been identified as one of the primary target nations for this conference. With view to this conference, Voiceless Voices a Quarterly magazine being published by Global Forum against Caste-Discrimination has received the exclusive interview with Professor Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, the Chairperson of the Global Conference. The excerpts:



PROF. DR. DRONA PRAKASH RASALI,
Chairperson, Global Conference for a Caste Free
World 2025, Organizing Committee

What issues do this global conference address globally?

This global conference will discuss the conditions and plights of over 250 million people worldwide who have traditionally suffered due to caste-based discrimination. Key topics of discussion will include the historical evolution of caste structures, their socio-economic, cultural, and health-related impacts, educational policies and campaigns necessary for caste abolition, policy-making for social justice and reparative inclusion efforts, the impact of caste discrimination on migrant diaspora communities in western countries, and the implications of caste structures in the context of climate change. More than 20 renowned academic personalities from the United States, Canada, India, and Nepal have already confirmed their participation as speakers. Additionally, researchers, university students, and policy analysts will present their findings through posters and oral presentations. Activists working at both local and international levels against caste-based discrimination will also participate.

Does this conference release "Toronto Declaration" also?

At the conclusion of the conference, the "Toronto Declaration" will be issued, which will provide guidance for future research, educational programs, civil society activities, and policy-making processes. Special emphasis will be placed on coordinating with local, provincial, and national governments, as well as the international community, including the United Nations, to implement the recommendations outlined in the declaration. There are also consideration of plans to organize similar future conferences in various cities such as London, Washington-Baltimore, and Hong Kong in collaboration with local institutions and academic organizations.

As a writer, researcher and professor, what are the impacts of Caste Systems in Nepal and India?

From the medieval era to the present, the feudal state system in Nepal and India has attempted to legitimize caste-based discrimination through religious justifications. However, recent anthropological and genetic studies have shown that human societies are inherently mixed. It is believed that caste structures in the Indian subcontinent began to develop nearly 4,000 years ago when ancient Eurasian pastoralists and Iranian agricultural farmers migrated to the region. Initially, caste divisions were introduced under the pretext of labor division, primarily benefiting the ruling classes. Since this structure was human-made "social construct", Dalits (historically marginalized communities) have remained systematically excluded, leading to their social, economic,

cultural, and political marginalization. According to Nepal's National Social Exclusion Survey (2018), Hill Dalits are 12 times more excluded than Brahmins and Chhetris, while Terai Dalits face nine times more exclusion. Despite comprising nearly 15% of Nepal's total population, Dalits are virtually absent from any positions of power. It is also notable that the caste-based crime incidents against Dalits are rising in India and Nepal in the past one decade.

What do you see the barriers of Dalits overall development and what do you suggest for a caste-free world/ or reform?

Caste discrimination is a structural issue rather than a matter of individual capability or willpower. The Constitution of Nepal recognizes Dalits as the most vulnerable and marginalized community and provisions for free education up to higher levels, reservations in employment, inclusive political representation, and access to land and other benefits to empower them. However, full implementation of these provisions is still lacking, as the parliament has yet to enact the necessary laws and regulations. Dalit families without land ownership rights are deprived of education, making it difficult for them to enter the formal job market, thereby forcing them to live in a state of perpetual economic deprivation. Due to limited access to resources and opportunities, Dalits are unable to attain positions of influence, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

How do you assess the role of Human Rights Mechanisms in Nepal and globally ?

Human rights mechanisms have proven effective in addressing caste discrimination. For instance, Canada's strong human rights framework enables legal interventions to combat caste-based discrimination effectively. Nepal and India can also work toward eliminating caste discrimination by implementing similar practical human rights frameworks, in addition to the full enforcement legal and constitutional provisions.

Dalit women face the dual burden of caste and gender discrimination. They bear the brunt of household responsibilities while also enduring the worst impacts of caste-based oppression. Additionally, intergenerational psychological stress has been observed to negatively impact their health. A study conducted by this author in the United States found that African-American women experiencing such stress had higher rates of low birth weight in newborns.

What would be the way forward in future?

Researchers emphasize that ensuring political representation for Dalits is crucial in eradicating caste-based discrimination. Legal provisions must be established to improve access to education, employment opportunities, and economic empowerment. If these measures are implemented at local, provincial, and national levels, significant positive changes can be achieved.

As we move past the first quarter of the 21st century, the Toronto Declaration is expected to provide objective validation for a global movement aimed at eliminating caste-based and hereditary oppression. Sahayatra International, along with allied solidarity organizations, will advocate for the implementation of the declaration by engaging with the United Nations, relevant national agencies, and

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stakeholders through communication, dialogue, and action.

Humanity must free itself from the unnatural, unnecessary, and unjust burden of caste hierarchy and classification while ensuring equality and social justice. The dismantling of caste-based structures is imperative to fostering an environment where every individual is treated with dignity and respect. To achieve this, the international community, including the United Nations, state governments, human rights organizations, social activist groups, educational institutions, and media, must collectively focus on the following key agenda points:

First, Ensuring Political Representation: Justice-based participation of Dalit and oppressed communities must be guaranteed in all branches of government.

Second, Legal and Policy Reforms: Structural caste discrimination should be addressed at its root through legislative measures and policy improvements.

Third, Economic and Educational Support: Economic restructuring is necessary to provide financial and educational assistance to marginalized communities.

Fourth, Cultural Transformation: Discriminatory traditions must be challenged to promote inclusivity and societal change.

Fifth, Addressing Health Disparities: Relevant stakeholders should work toward raising awareness and preventing the adverse health effects caused by caste-based discrimination, such as intergenerational trauma and psychological stress.

Sixth, Leadership Development: Programs should be implemented to empower, strengthen, and make Dalit leadership more accountable.

Seventh, Allies from the Mainstream: Additionally, mainstream political and leadership figures must also undergo orientation and education to build allies among them with the clear understanding of the principles and perspectives of caste equality and social justice, which have often been found misrepresented.

Finally, I would urge all governments and state that this is the time for action, as the era of waiting for caste equality and social justice. Thank you all and hope for your effective participation and constructive suggestion and feedback there to make this conference a grand success!

Humanity must free itself from the unnatural, unnecessary, and unjust burden of caste hierarchy and classification while ensuring equality and social justice. The dismantling of caste-based structures is imperative to fostering an environment where every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

The Human Rights...

Recommendations

1. Nepal should prioritize lifting its reservations on Articles 4, 6, and 22 that has been there for more than 54 years. Since 1987, CERD Committee has been giving suggestions through the Concluding Observations to lift those reservation emphasizing that full realization of human rights by citizens are obstructed due to those reservations.
2. Nepal should make special declaration of Article 14 that recognizes the competence of the CERD Committee to receive and consider individual and group complaints. It will open ways to send complains to CERD Committee in case government Nepal denies to register incidents of caste-based discrimination and untouchability or shows reluctant to investigate the incidents.
3. Nepal must submit periodic reports to the CERD Committee biennially, ensuring these reports are prepared through broad consultations with affected communities and victims at different levels.
4. All three levels of government should develop comprehensive time-bound action plans to address the CERD Committee's concluding observations, with adequate budgetary allocations for implementation. The federal government has to develop periodic Action Plan to eliminate the practices of caste-based discrimination and untouchability effectively.
5. In accordance with the Constitution, Nepal should adopt a full proportional inclusive system in all state bodies including constitutional institutions, diplomatic and political offices, and public services ensuring representation proportionate to the populations of Dalits and other marginalized groups. The present limited quota system should be replaced by full proportional inclusive system.
6. Nepal should establish an independent Ombudsman or Commission to investigate all incidents of caste-based discrimination and untouchability occurring since 4 June 2006 (the date Nepal was declared an untouchability-free nation). There are hundreds of incidents where police denies to register the incidents, victims lack access to justice systems, or victims are compelled to withdraw their complaints due to pressure from perpetrators or political interventions. This opens door to victims of past heinous human rights violations to seek truth, justice and reparations as per law.
7. A truth seeking body should be established to study the trend, causes and consequences of caste-based discriminations and untouchability practices in three phases (1954 to 1963, 1963 to 2006 and 2006 to date. It would recommend necessary policies, strategies and actions to eliminate such practices.
8. The National Dalit Commission (NDC) should be strengthened as an autonomous, independent, and well-resourced institution, with provincial branches established in all seven provinces.

Mr. Pariyar is an M.Phil/PhD Scholar of Conflict, Peace and Development Studies in Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. He has served as a Human Rights Officer in United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal. Email: bpariyar@yahoo.com

The fight...

easier to be involved on existential issues like climate warming. It is also true that for a youth from the Dalit community the priority number one remains a different existential fight: the fight for her own dignity and respect. This is the fight for survival and cannot be downplayed nor minimized. Yet we need to find ways for young people from different communities to mix up and interact among each other. This is the starting point even though the fight against caste discrimination will be won through different and complementary strategies and approaches. Filing a lawsuit or carrying out research on affirmative legislation must go hand to hand with other efforts.

But there is another indispensable element: members of the Dalit community should do a better job at coordinating their efforts, at setting aside differences, those of more "political" nature or those more "structural" caused by the same perverse system that all of them are trying to overcome. To win the war against discrimination, it is high time to set aside egos and rivalries and forge a stronger common front. That indispensable alliance with other members of the society will never materialize if, first, the Dalit Movement will not get their act together and forge a unified front.

The writer is the Co-Founder of ENGAGE and The Good Leadership

Some Testimonial Cases of Caste Atrocities: Demanding Urgent Actions

■ By Arjun Bahadur BK

Despite Nepal's constitutional and legal commitments to equality and human rights, caste-based discrimination and violence against Dalit communities remain pervasive. The constitution of Nepal guarantees equality under Article 18, and criminalizes caste-based discrimination and untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act 2068 BS, further mandates punitive action against offenders and compensation for victims. Additionally Nepal ratified the International caste and Racial Discrimination (ICERD) long back on January 1971.

However, the persistent violation of Dalit human rights contradicts these legal safeguards. Recent incidents highlight systemic nature of caste-based atrocities and complicity of the state mechanism.

Case No. 1: Inter-caste Marriage of Satyandra Ram and Neha Rauniyar



Satyandra Ram and Neha Rauniyar, resident of Sarlahi, registered their inter-caste marriage in Kapilbastu. However, familial pressure forced the couple to flee to India. Shockingly, state security forces, allegedly misused by dominant caste family members, apprehended and separated the couple upon their return. The incident provoked mass protest by Dalit activists, demanding the Home Minister's resignation and legal action. The issue was raised in parliament, compelling a formal response. The National Dalit commission summoned IGP Basanta Kunwar and other senior officials, instructing immediate legal redress on 24th Paus 2081.

Case No. 2: Displacement of Dalit Families by the representative from Dominant Caste

In Aurahi Rural Municipality-5, Siraha, local leaders forcibly displaced a Dalit family using bulldozer to construct a Mahayagya mandap. Ward

Chairperson, Shivaji Yadav, Former Chair Dilip Yadav, and a religious leader Bajarangibaba were involved in the demolition of Deepak Deepak Malik Dom's home. Public outrage grew across social media and civil society. Although police arrested the accused ones including municipality chair, they were later released



on bail. Their political party publicly welcomed them back, reflecting the entrenched caste biases in governance and lack of minimum ethical standard.

Case No. 3: Suicide of a Rape Survivor

In Lahan, Siraha, a 24-year-old Dalit woman, Anandadevi Sada, died by suicide after being raped by Sanjib Kumar Yadav and Shyamsundar. Despite multiple attempts, her family was denied the right to file an official complaint. Instead, family was pressured to accept minor compensation. The trauma led her to commit suicide, underscoring the impunity enjoyed by dominant caste perpetrators.



These are the few testimonial cases on caste-based atrocities, despite the country declared as untouchability-free country more than a decade back. These cases expose the gap between constitutional promises and lived realities. They illustrate how legal and institutional framework are often undermined by systemic caste privilege and weak enforcement, demanding urgent structural reform and accountability.

India conducting seperate census of Dalits

■ VV Reporter, India

Government of India is going to have its census of Dalits separately. As millions of Dalits, recognized as the scheduled caste across India facing still a rigid caste-based discrimination and untouchability for centuries which have affected daily lives, are going to be counted from the government authority.

The Indian government has long insisted that the social hierarchy has no place in the world's most populous nation, which banned caste discrimination in 1950. So, it came as a surprise when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration announced that caste would be counted in the upcoming national census for the first time since 1931 – when India was still a British colony.

Counting caste will "ensure that our social fabric does not come under political pressure," the government said in its April press release. "This will ensure that society becomes stronger economically and socially, and the country's progress continues without hindrance." The release didn't include any detail on how the caste data would be collected, or even when the census will take place (it has been repeatedly delayed from its original 2021 date). But the announcement has revived a longstanding debate about whether counting



caste will uplift disadvantaged groups – or further entrench divisions.

The proposal is so controversial because a caste census "forces the state to confront structural inequalities that are often politically and socially inconvenient," said Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of the Population Foundation of India. The lack of caste data over the past century means "we are effectively flying blind, designing policies in the dark while claiming to pursue social justice," she added. "So, the next census is going to be a historical census."

Global Forum Japan supports to the family of deceased Bibek

■ VV Reporter, Japan

Global Forum Japan has provided financial assistance to the family of deceased Bibek Chimoriya with a purse of eighty five thousand seven hundred eighty eight rupees. A 22 years young man residing at Fukuoma, learning Japanese language, hailed from Jugu of Gaurishankar RM, Ward no. 2, Dolkha was died of heart attack on July 3, 2024 nighttime in his own room.

Global Forum Japan Chair Mr. Dhana Bahadur BK, Vice Chair Ms. Muna Sunar, Treasurer Mr. Som BK, member Sujana Sunar were present in the amount handover. It was handed over through JME which had provided the service in free of cost for humanitarian assistance.

15 Years of Community Banking to Empower Deprived Communities

■ VV Reporter, Butwal

The Janautthan Community Microfinance Institution recently has celebrated its 15th anniversary in its headquarter in Butwal. It is the only financial institution, licensed from the central bank of Nepal, promoted and led by Dalits. It came into the existence since November 14, 2010 specifically targeting for the economic empowerment of the most deprived communities with community banking approach. Now it has its 39 branches in 19 districts. During this period it reached out to about 60 thousands deprived people providing nearly 20 billion loan with

deprived communities. Its motto is "Building Inclusive Financial System Extending Services to the poorest of the poor" which was the banner slogan for the first National Microfinance Summit-2008. It also aims to promote the indigenous knowledge and native skill to bring it up to the commercial scale. The institution has been designed in such a way to reach the most unreached people of the community with some specific model and products. It runs under the banking community (BC) approach that aims to associate target groups with financial counselling. In fact, it is the first institution in Nepal initiating green lending since its inception for environment protection and



Banking Community meeting at Chepang Village

credit plus services and mobilizing 10 billion savings. During its celebration a MoU has been signed with Lumbini Commerce Campus to have collaboration on promoting community banking, business counseling, green growth, native-skill based entrepreneurship and facilitating for higher education to community members.

Jana Utthan Pratisthan undertook an empirical research on microfinance practices led by Dr. Man Bahadur Bk. As an outcome, this financial institution has been established to promote community banking for building inclusive financial system with new ideas and techniques such as 'credit first individual intervention' as the main community banking initiatives. The main aim of institution is to promote financial inclusion in community level so as to enhance economic condition of the

climate actions.

The approach to financial access is targeted to the marginalized communities such as socially deprived groups, historically bounded labourers and conflict victims. Since its establishment the institution has been involved in the Global Microcredit Summit Campaign and received certificate of appreciation for its contribution to bring the poor families out of poverty. Likewise it also involved with the Smart Campaign for Client Protection and developed client protection policy. Moreover, the community banking approach has been recognized as the third generation microfinance (Nepal Zone of Peace: A Revised Concept by Isabelle Duquesne published in 2011). It can be an appropriate approach of Protective Liberalism to bring up the most deprived communities globally.

“Dalitlaai Khai” - An Activism of the Shackled Ones

■ By Rajendra Senchurey

When hope for justice was fading amid the dark realities of fractured partisan politics in Rukum West Massacre case, Khagendra Sunar emerged as a messiah. He staged a 2-days hunger strike at the District Administrative Office and picketed outside the District Court of Rukum West for 10 days. The protests by Dalits subsided after the culprits were jailed for their heinous crimes, but Khagendra's activism did not. Still agonized by the incident and inspired by the victory of justice against the odds, this journalist-turned-activist started taking to the street elsewhere too, all for the rights and dignity of the historically suppressed 6 million Dalits of Nepal. He vowed to fight against the persecution against Dalits wherever may it be.



After getting prominence as a firebrand activist, Khagendra launched a nonviolent movement called the 'Dalit for Dalit Campaign, Nepal,' initially focused on the western region. Mostly broadcasted live through social media, his actions

garnered popular support from the Dalit youths across the country.

The campaign gained national attention when he staged a protest in the national capital Kathmandu wearing a 3-kilogram shackle and holding the banner that read 'Dalitlaai Khai' (Where's for Dalit?) from 7 August 2024. This polysemic expression was meant to question: where is the representation of Dalits in the state mechanism? Where are the laws to protect the constitutionally-mandated fundamental rights for Dalits? Where are the appointments for Dalits? Where is the justice for Dalits? The sole purpose of the 45 days-long protest on the shackle was to demand the implementation of proportional representation of Dalits in all sectors in line with the letter and spirit of the constitution. 'Dalitlaai Khai' protesters were arrested several times for attempting to cross the restricted area.

Agitated Khagendra breathes fire in his speeches, not only to the government and political parties but also to Dalit politicians and civil society leaders. This activism of the shackled ones has filled the vacuum seen for a while in the Dalit movement. Nonetheless, the Dalit political leaders criticize them for not clearly defining their political stance/ideology. Even though this campaign has put huge pressure on the government, some Dalit politicians rhetorically tag them as a populist. Supporters, however, perceive these protesters as the fearless heroes who could lead an unprecedented change.

An interaction held on State of Dalits in Nepal and the Role of Diaspora

■ VV Reporter, USA

The Global Forum Against Caste-based Discrimination (The Global Forum) organized an interaction on the State of Dalits in Nepal and the Role of Diaspora on 17 November 2024 in Colorado, USA.

The Member of House of Representative (HoR) of Nepal Hon'ble Ranendra Barali present as the chief guest, Narayan Shrestha had participated as a special guest while Padam Bishwakarma, the Chair of the Global Forum chaired the program. Arjun Bagale, the member of the Global Forum and Chair of Rockey Mountain Friends of Nepal welcomed to the participants and also highlighted the objectives of an interaction. General Secretary Amrit Bishwakarma memorized and appreciated the contribution made by MP Barali for the Dalit movement. The Chair of Global Forum Padam Bishwakarma and special guest Shrestha felicitated to Barali in the program.

The representatives of the different organizations working in Colorado expressed their views and solidarity in the program and combatting against caste-based atrocities. Chair of the Himani Trust in USA Krishna Murari Dhungel, Chair of Sankhuwasabha Society America



Shanti Shrestha, Former Chair of Tamu: Dhi: Colorado Chandra Gurung, NRN America Member Nabaraj

Neupane, NRN Colorado Chair Prakash Paudel, Ex. Chair of NRN Colorado Raj Dhungana, Chair of Nepal Film Society America Nabaraj Shrestha, newly elected president of ANESAS Colorado Kiran Adhikari, Vice Chair of the ANA America Binod Tripathi, journalist Topeन्द्रa Soni, Singer Gyanendra Gadai, Chair of Nepali Ghar Bashanta Lamsal including among other. MP Barali raised the issue of Nabaraj BK and Ajit Mijar's killing for love affair with so-called high caste girl and the role of Nepali diaspora abroad would be crucial for the giving victim the justice and punish perpetrators.

Dalits proposed Rs. 5 billion budget for FY 2082/83

■ VV Reporter, Kathmandu

Dalits community in Nepal has provided budget suggestion for FY 2082/83 (2025/26) to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Hon'ble Bishnu Prasad Paudel following the pre-budget interaction organized on 22 April at Finance Ministry with the special presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Paudel, NDC Chair Hon'ble Devraj Bishwakarma, Member of House of Representative Hon'ble Ranendra Barali, former State Minister Jitu Gautam, Finance Secretary Ghanashyam Upadhyaya, former secretary Dr. Man Bahadur BK, chair of the Center for Dalit Rights and Development (CDRD) Meghendra BK including among other.

The letter of budget memorandum was prepared by Dr. Man Bahadur Bishwakarma, the former secretary, Mr. Dhana Bahadur Mijar and Mr. Meghendra Bishwakarma based on the feedback and suggestion received from the interaction and submitted it to the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on May 1, 2025 at the Ministry. Former Secretary Dr. Man Bahadur BK led the whole process which was coordinated by Meghendra Bishwakarma. The Dalits demand includes 13



points of programs for overall development of Dalits in FY 2082/83 which are: Skill Development Program; establishment and operation of Dalit Development Authority; Madhesi Dalit Housing Program; Free Health Insurance Program for Dalits; Truth seeking of Dalits Past-atrocities; establishment of Dalit Development Fund; higher education scholarship etc. The budget has been proposed a total 1.84 billion for program and 3 billion for Dalit Development Fund which is expected to function regularly as revolving fund.

Out of 13 programs few of its have been addressed in the Policy and Programs of Government presented by Rt. Hon'ble president of Nepal Ram Chandra Paudel. Scholarship program for higher education for Dalits students, establishing Dalit development authority, Skill (Shilpi) development program have been addressed.

MP of 'Maori' community tore the bill in the parliament

■ VV Reporter, New Zealand

Last year a parliamentary event had been viral worldwide when a MP of Maori community tore the proposed bill in the parliament. It has raised the collective voices of the deprived community in the other areas of the globe. Maori community is the deprived community like Dalits in New Zealand.

A New Zealand parliamentarian from Maori community, Hana Maipi-Clarke tore the controversial bill and performed a Haka at the parliament. Critics say the proposed law undermines Maori rights promised in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. After that event in parliament, nationwide protests and a 9-day march was continued. Opposition parties demand government accountability and respect for Maori voices, as tensions escalate before November 19.

After few month of that incident, a



New Zealand parliamentary committee has proposed recently that three Māori MPs be suspended from parliament for their protest haka during a sitting last year.

The haka could have "intimidated" other lawmakers, the committee ruled, recommending that she be suspended for a week and Te Pāti Māori (Māori Party) co-leaders Rawiri Waititi and Debbie Ngarewa-Packer be banned for 21 days.

The Māori Party criticised the recommendations as a "warning shot to all of us to fall in line." The recommendation has been condemned worldwide and appealed to revert it .

Basanta: A Movie that Nurtures Voiceless Voices

■ BY KARNA BAHADUR NEPALI

From the diverse creations of Prakash Saput in the past, he is efficacious artist and has been strongly articulating voice against all types of discrimination and traditional harmful practices especially caste-based discrimination and untouchability in the Nepali Society. Despite Nepal changed into the federal democratic republican the societal structure is heavily interconnected with feudalistic mindset yet. If we remind the previous creations of Saput, the critics, comments and feedback are concerned with his caste rather than his creation and innovation. It shows that there are still feudalistic mindsets people who don't



like to see the successful person from so-called Dalit community in any walk of life and they always expect that those socially excluded people should have to serve them as they desire.

Recently, Saput released a movie namely

"Basanta" is another instance whereas he tries to firmly explain about the entrenched caste-based discrimination and untouchability including other aspects of the society. This movie actually brings out voiceless voices, it has out-spoken and elaborated about the structures of Nepali society and prevalence of traditional harmful practices whereas how a young boy or girl in their adolescent age could be closer or fall in love regardless of any caste, gender and ethnicity but what is the perception of society toward inter-caste marriage, caste-based discrimination etc. Moreover, this movie shows how a young Dalit boy struggles for his dream and what are the bottlenecks of his life to achieve destination along with other many aspects.

The intention of 'Basanta' as movie was quite excellent, it is a film that tries to articulate loudly and urgently about the almost all traditional harmful practices of the Nepali society especially caste-based discrimination in one movie like textbook. Actually, the delinquent is not that 'Basanta' talks about too many things, the matter is; it talks about too many things at once with little explanation and practically, there was no space for the viewers to breathe because there are too many subplots, which hampers the audience remembering them all clearly. The movie's dialogues, throughout, are with literary tones which provide the audiences some pause amidst the narrative untidiness.

Moreover, as a character, Basanta dreams of

revolution and writes overpoweringly about the equality and transformation. But when it happens in his life, he couldn't be confident to marry his love interest, Shanti (Played by Swastima Khadka), a girl from a Brahmin family. This is also a kind of disconnection feels in a movie whereas the caste-based discrimination and untouchability is the central issues of the movie, has already explored in Nepali Cinema. Hence, lacking a fresh outlook, the delivery of the movie presents repetitive rather than revolutionary. In addition, the film's supporting characters seem to occur only to drive the message forward.

Despite few of its defects, 'Basanta' is not a film to be dismissed entirely, it has great message. Especially, its architect, Saput, is someone who has attentions about society, who desires change, and who have faith in the power of cinema to enlighten and instigate. 'Basanta' could have been a commanding film.

At the time when the film Basanta was released, he was in controversy for praising Prime Minister KP Oli. He got 'Hanuman' on social media. But Oli's praise was not the only reason why Basanta flopped. It is mixture of conventional mindsets towards Dalit community.

Yes, it is true that life is learning process, the journey as a singer Saput is quite successful and impressive in Nepali society and had lead actor in some movies too. Moreover he has been continuously blowing the strong messages against discrimination through his arts.

Movie Name : Basanta
Director: Prakash Saput
Cast: Prakash Saput, Swastima Khadka, Prabhat Pal Thakuri
Duration: 140 minutes
Year: 2025
Language: Nepali

Likhu RM to endorse Dalit Empowerment Bill

■ By Devika Mijar

One of the Rural Municipalities among four hundred sixty and seven hundred fifty three local governments of Nepal, Lukhu Rural Municipality located to Nuwakot district, Bagmati Province will soon be endorsing the Dalit empowerment bill with the strong mechanism of Dalit Development Authority (DDA) for Dalits' empowerment and overall development.

The First Historic Likhu Dalit Rights Conference 2025, being organized by Suryamati Youth Awareness Foundation (SYAF) in Likhu-4, Chaughada, Nuwakot on 8-9 May 2025 with the presence of more than one hundred Dalits front-liners in Likhu which was historic in itself from the participation and widely discussed the Dalit issues. The participants demanded for the Dalit empowerment bill with the provision of strong mechanism of Dalit Development Authority within.

Likhu RM Chair Dhruva Shrestha inaugurated the program on 8 May whereas Hon'ble Ramesh Kumar Mahat, the member of Bagmati Province Assembly and Chair of the Nepali Congress Nuwakot District Working Committee closed the program on 9 May 2025. Mr. Dhana Bahadur Mijar, the Founding Chair and Executive Director of SYAF chaired the formal program.

Speaking at the closing of the program, Hon'ble Mahat said that the discrimination and untouchability is very severe social problem in Nepal and such social malpractice should be eliminated soon. "NC nominated Dhanman Singh Pariyar from Dalit community for the position of General Secretary while BP Koirala

was the Chairman and Dwarikadevi Thakurai as the first woman minister then" he said, "that was the time when nobody would speak about inclusion which remained as the historic incidence." Now every political parties have started following the inclusion within



and state mechanism which is great achievement for Dalits. He also memorized the contribution of Dalit luminary leader of India Babasaheb Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. He suggested participants to raise their voices and Likhu RM to address the issues raised by them.

Altogether six position papers were presented there in the program by the different experts, advocate and rights activists. Advocate Prakash Nepali, also a Nepal's prominent right activist presented the position paper on "Legal Dynamics of Dalit Inclusion: Where,

What and How Much?", writer and Dalit rights activist Saroj Dillu Bishwakarma presented on "Dynamics of Nepali Dalit Movement: Achievement and Challenges" and Mr Dhana Bahadur Mijar, the guest editor of Voiceless Voices quarterly presented the position paper on "Local Government for Dalits Suffering: Why is Dalit Empowerment bill needed?" in first day.

Likewise, Hon'ble Sundar Purkuti, the member of National Dalit Commission presented the paper on "Dalit rights from constitutional and legal lens: Past and present and the Role of Local Government for Dalits" and Advocate Surendra Raj Adhikari presented the paper entitled "Constitutional and legal rights from the lens of a Non-Dalits: Issues and future strategies".

In an opening session Chairman of Likhu RM Dhruva Shrestha said that Dalits community has been discriminated for centuries and now it's the time to eliminate those malpractices. "The Likhu rural municipality is convinced with the idea of SYAF and Likhu Dalits to write and endorse the Dalit Empowerment Bill with the strong mechanism of Dalit Development Authority" he said, "the Likhu RM is willing to endorse the bill with the adequate discussion and consensus in the rural assembly."

Vice Chair Ms. Subhadra Upreti Adhikari also applauded for the conference and she made the commitment to provide the support needed for Likhu Dalit community including endorsement of the bill and other program. Ms. Parbati Dhakal, the Social Section Officer said that she was very worried if the budget allocated for Dalits gets freeze and expressed her satisfaction the conference has been of great success.

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